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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 HARARE 000245

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SES-O
AF/S FOR S. HILL,
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
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STATE PASS TO USAID FOR E. LOKEN AND L. DOBBINS
STATE PASS TO NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B. PITTMAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/29/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [ASEC](#) [ZI](#)
SUBJECT: ZIMBABWE ELECTIONS: ELECTION DAY

REF: HARARE 244 AND PREV.

Classified By: Ambassador James D. McGee for reason 1.4 (d)

11. (U) Summary: Voting day in Zimbabwe was largely calm and peaceful. Eleven embassy observers who were spread out throughout the country were permitted to observe the vote and remain at polling stations for vote counts. In defiance of the government, the MDC told the press it would announce results based on figures posted at polling places at 1 pm on March 30. End summary.

VOTING DAY QUIET

12. (U) Reports from Embassy and other observers around Zimbabwe indicate that voting was generally calm and peaceful. Long lines at some polling places in the early morning generally disappeared in late morning, and there were no reports of long lines of voters at the designated poll closing time of 7 pm. There were numerous individual reports of apparent efforts at intimidation, such as ZANU partisans making lists of voters names, but there was no apparent systematic pattern of abuse. Following last week's presidential proclamation, which overturned a legal bar on police presence in polling places, police were present at all sites visited by Embassy observers. There were only a few instances in which they were reported to attempt voter intimidation. Embassy observers reported that MDC party agents and independent observers from the Zimbabwe Electoral Support Network (ZESN) were present at 80-90 percent of polling places.

13. (U) There were many voters turned away because their names were not on the lists in the wards where they thought they were registered. Reports received by the Embassy suggest about 10 percent of voters experienced this frustration; the number was as high as 50 percent in some locations. This was due at least in part to a change in the voting system: in the

past, voters could vote anywhere in a constituency, but regulatory changes now limit them to a specific ward.

¶4. (U) The absence of long lines suggests that turnout may not have been as high as the MDC had hoped and as many had expected, given the recent surge in enthusiasm about the opposition. Experienced observers reported that lines were shorter than in 2002 and 2005, but also note that the number of polling places was greater (9400 this year vs. just 5000 in 2002) while Zimbabwe's population has declined as economic migrants fled. In Harare and other urban areas the streets were quiet, with very little traffic.

¶5. (U) The MDC held press conferences at noon and 4 pm. The MDC presented a list of complaints, including:

- Exclusion of party polling agents from some polling stations;
- High rates of voter rejection, particularly for voters with Anglo-Saxon names;
- Intimidation associated with the deployment of security forces;
- Questions about the indelibility of ink applied to voters fingers to prevent multiple voting;
- An excessive number of ballot papers printed: 9 million ballots for 5.9 million voters on the rolls (some believe the actual voting population is likely more like 3.5 million, given emigration), as well as missing books of ballots; and
- Polling stations in several districts ran out of ballots.

¶6. (SBU) The Embassy has heard of a number of arrests, including a South African and a Dutch citizen who were picked up transporting MDC party agents and election materials and

HARARE 00000245 002 OF 003

the daughter of Fay Chung, a Makoni supporter running for Senate, who was arrested for taking photographs. the media has reported the petrol bombing of a ZANU candidates home in Bulawayo; the Embassy has no further information on the incident.

PARALLEL VOTE COUNTS

¶7. (U) In both press conferences, MDC Secretary General Tendai Biti expressed absolute confidence that Morgan Tsvangirai would win the presidential election. The MDC has

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announced that it is collecting data on vote tallies posted at individual polling places and will release its tabulation of results at 1 pm on Sunday, March 30. This defies government edicts that no one except the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) may release results. The MDC's announced results will seek to be comprehensive, rather than based on a sample of polling places. Since the MDC will find it easiest to collect information from polling places in areas where it enjoys high popularity, the results are likely to be biased.

¶8. (C) USAID provided funding to the National Democratic Institute to assist ZESN in the conduct of a parallel vote tabulation (PVT). ZESN was hesitant to undertake the PVT, has not announced that the exercise is underway, and is cautious about public release of its outcome. The tabulation will be based on a scientific sampling of polling places and if data collection is successful, the PVT will have very high accuracy. ZESN is concerned that the MDC's release of partisan results will undermine confidence in the integrity of ZESN's PVT. ZESN believes it may not have results until Monday, March 31. NDI continues to work with ZESN on how best to use the PVT results as a tool to encourage the ZEC to announce honest results, rather than manufacturing a Mugabe victory.

RESULTS FROM EMBASSY OBSERVERS

¶9. (SBU) During the day, Embassy observers penetrated deep into rural areas, where locals were surprised to see observers; observers reported that they were well received everywhere they went.. They crossed paths with other observers only in urban areas and near the luxury Hwange Safari Lodge. However, Embassy employees were instructed to put safety first and return at nightfall to a polling place near their hotel to watch the vote count. Since these polling places were in ruling areas, the counts observed by Embassy observers are likely biased against Mugabe, whose strongest support is in remote rural areas. Nevertheless, for what little it is worth, we share the tallies of individual polling places below recorded by Embassy observers. Makoni's showing is even worse than predicted by polls; it is likely many of his supporters decided he stood no chance, and voted otherwise (or failed to vote).

Location	Mugabe	Tsvangirai	Makoni
Mutare, Manicaland	47	213	21
Chiredzi, Masvingo	76	84	5
Hwange, Mat. North	17	61	17
Kadoma, Midlands	35	65	5
Tafara, Harare	60	236	22
Uzumba, Mash. East	261	188	11
Shurugwi, Midlands	55	159	44
Bulawayo, Mat. South	9	121	117
Chihambakwe, Masvingo	128	246	21

¶10. (U) All Embassy observers reported to the Embassy Command Center by 12:15 am, local time. No private American citizens

HARARE 00000245 003 OF 003

contacted the Embassy on March 29. The Command Center will close until 10 am local time on Sunday, March 30.

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